

Clashes in southeast Turkey kill seven, new curfews declared

Seven people were killed in clashes with security forces in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast, officials said on Monday, as authorities declared curfews across the restive region.

The clashes are the latest in months of violence following the collapse of a ceasefire between the government and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in July. Since then, Ankara has imposed round-the-clock curfews in many areas.

Two people were killed as police clashed with crowds protesting against a security crackdown in the main southeastern city of Diyarbakir, a hospital official and witnesses said.

Further south, five Kurdish militants were killed in Mardin province's Dargecit district, another area under curfew, security officials said. It was not clear exactly when they were killed.

Armoured police vehicles roamed Diyarbakir's streets, firing water cannon and tear gas as hundreds gathered for a march called by the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) to protest a two-week-long curfew in the city's district of Sur.

Teargas billowed in the city streets as armoured vehicles sped around and protesters lobbed stones at police. Shopkeepers shuttered their stores ahead of the protest, which the government said was banned. Few buses were operating, rubbish was not collected and most students did not go to school.

Youths with scarves masking their faces tried to block streets with piles of bricks and burning wood before police pursued them into side streets.

In Sirnak province, the governor imposed a curfew in two towns near the borders of both Syria and Iraq from Monday night, a day after teachers were seen streaming out of the area on the orders of education authorities.

Locals, anticipating that the teachers were being recalled ahead of a curfew, formed queues at bakeries and shops to buy food, witnesses said. Several thousand teachers are based in the towns.

The two towns of Cizre and Silopi were under tight security, with police armoured vehicles stationed at the entrances to both, witnesses said.

"A curfew is declared to neutralise separatist terror group members, remove explosives-laden barricades and ditches ... and secure public order," the Sirnak governor's office said in a statement. It said the curfew would begin at 11 p.m. (2100 GMT).

A curfew was also imposed on Monday in the town of Nusaybin on the Syrian border to restore order "in response to increasing terror incidents", state authorities in the town announced.

According to data compiled by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, 52 curfews have been imposed since mid-August across seven Turkish provinces in the region, affecting areas where some 1.3 million people live.

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militant group launched its insurgency in 1984 and more than 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict. It is designated as a terrorist group by Turkey, the United States and European Union.